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ABSTRACT

Taking the perspective of environmental psychology, this paper interprets the influence of educational settings upon children's socialization. The physical environment and the social structure it reflects determine the nature of information acquired during socialization. Socialization functions, long assumed by institutions such as schools, are linked by a system of institutions. Children must follow institutional roles or be punished. Historically, the poor, minorities, and those not following traditional sex roles are punished. Many reform efforts have cited schools' environmental conditions to justify changes. Open-space classrooms labeled poor and minority students as unable to "handle" a perceived lessened amount of structure. Political conservatism has brought a "back to basics" movement; poor populations are left with bare essentials. Discrepancy between rhetoric and reality thus reflects constraints placed on educational environments by institutional assumptions. Spontaneity is viewed as impulsivity, necessitating historical norms of control and authority. The implicit goal of conformity is achieved by the overt goal of independence--granted if the child conforms to goals of the setting. Because institutions are resistant to change, children should be given projects that empower change in themselves. Research and historical study should open up alternative environments and futures. Two reference pages and several children's drawings are appended. (CJH)

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INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS AND CHILDREN'S LIVES: AN HISTORICAL, DEVELOPMENTAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

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INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS AND CHILDREN'S LIVES: AN HISTORICAL, DEVELOPMENTAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES[1]

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The perspective I present in this paper is that of an environmental psychologist. There are varied approaches to this field. The approach I and my collegues take is that a series of interdependent factors — physical, social, political and economic, must be taken into account if we are to understand people/environment relationships, for example, the relationship between learning environments and the behaviors, attitudes, feelings and development, both cognitive and social, of the children in them. These factors, together, constitute the core of our conception of "environment" or "setting", terms I will use interchangeably to include far more than the physical details alone. The physical environment is one element, and a neglected one, in understanding the educational system. But that system has had a conceptual history, a social history, as well as an architectural history within the United States. The role of the physical environment must be examined in its complete context.

For twelve years my collegues and I observed the use of space and educational practices in many schools which were of different vintages and physical forms and claimed to have different educational philosophies. These included open plan schools and schools utilizing open educational philosophy. We found that in most of these settings what occured on a daily basis did not reflect the goals that teachers, administrators or designers said they were trying to achieve. People talked about the value of individualized programs yet taught group classes and measured progress using standardized tests. Though the fixed desks and seats had been replaced by moveable furniture, in most rooms and schools no matter what the educational philosophy or the overall design of the space, the arrangements set at the beginning of the school year remained until the last day of classes, including the flexible walls. This was true despite the repeated declarations of staff that their spaces and rooms "weren't working" or that they wanted them to reflect changing programs. In all of our work it has been impossible to ignore the difference between what people said they were doing and what we saw them doing.

As environmental psychologists, attempting to understand the relationship between the stated goals of a particular place, the administrative and educational programs instituted to attain these goals, the physical, social, economic and political environments in which these programs were implemented, and the eventual impacts on the lives of children, it has also been impossible to ignore the powerful implications of such places, especially their socializing power for children. Central factors in our understanding of what is occuring in learning environments, or even the conceptions of them (for example, as buildings) are: 1) the nature of child development and socialization and the role of the physical environment in these processes; 2) the role of the school as an institution within a particular society at a particular point in time, as well as 3) its role historically as a socio-physical setting.

Child Development, Socialization and the Physical Environment

The physical environment, the social structure within which it is embedded and which it supports and reflects, as well as its symbolic meanings, determine to a large extent the kinds of experiences children have and what they can learn about the world. How children learn cannot be separated from what they learn and where they learn. Thus, all of child development, including cognitive development, involves socialization(Ingelby, 1974). The goal of socialization is the internalization of dominant norms which then become the assumptive basis, largely unquestioned, governing the individual's behavior and attitudes (Bem, 1970). It is one of our basic premises that part of that socialization, or the shaping of consciousness, involves learning to use the physical environment in specific ways and to understand in particular ways its social, personal and symbolic meanings.

The physical environments in which children grow up give them a message about who they are and what they can be within their society. For example, one of the questions Franklin Frazier asked Black children in 1940 was: "Are Black schools as good as white schools?". One boy replied

> Definitely no! And I can prove it.....We always get the buildings after the whites have torn them up or when they're about to fall to pieces. We get all the out-dated equipment and used stuff. We know the program is different. (Frazier, 1940, excerpted in Bremner, 1974, p. 1666).

Through the socialization process, children internalize the normative social order, both its physical and social aspects, including the experience of school itself. In several schools we implemented a futures project, a teaching and learning process with adults and children working together to understand environmental change now and in the future (Baldassari et al., 1987). We began this project by asking children to draw, or in some other way communicate to us and to their peers, their images of the future. Several children drew images of future learning environments or means for learning. When images were hung up and discussed one could see how the physical and social aspects of school were being learned and how the present formed the basis for projections into the future.

According to the boy who drew the "skyscraper school" of the future (Figue 1),* it will house all grades from pre-school to high school under one roof. He explained that it would take an entire lunch hour just to reach the cafeteria. Other kids drew images of robot teachers and computer based teaching machines (Figure 2). Here is the dialogue that accompanied one such machine:

> Where would it be?...It's a home teacher, it would be in your home...So, no one would have to go to school anymore?...Yeah, you just stay in your house. ...Well, what if you get a mean teacher who yells at you all the time?...You'd just pull out the plug; you can program all the things you want in it so you can program in your own teacher....Where are all the teachers at?...There, in the screen!...But, where? ...They're inside of no where. It's just like an automatic thing....Will there be any schools?... No...Well, there would be a school if you couldn't afford one of these.

* Figures attached at back of paper.

Yet another image of the future school drawn by a girl in this class of 10 year olds was titled "Silent Lunch" (Figure 3). When the children later developed questions they had about the future, one was: "Will bells still ring in the school of the future?" Yet, more telling about their schools and their learning experiences were their explanations for how all this would come to be. When we asked them who was responsible for the future world they drew, the answer was "they" — undefined, unexplained, but obviously in control.

We agree with others that the socialization process is far from perfect. Except under the most repressive circumstances some people will gain access to alternatives and resist the imposition of the social order (Giroux, 1983). Yet, children have no control over the material and social conditions of their lives. Their access to alternatives is severely constrained. Their resistance, given their limited power, often has severe consequences. Therefore, most children's sense of themselves and their competence will largely reflect the relationship between the dominant values and the extent to which they can realize these values within the realities, physical and social, of their lives.

What is the role of the school in this process of socialization in the United States, how has this role evolved, and what are its legacies in the current educational system?

School as an Institution in the United States

Over the last 150 years in the United States, a series of socio-physical settings — institutions, such as schools, day care centers, and psychiatric facilities--and the laws which govern their use, have become the main agents of socialization. The transfer of socialization functions to institutions seems to divide the child's life into separate and specialized components. These separate settings each have specific goals, some explicit, some implicit. Yet, while these settings generally remain physically separate from one another, within the last 75 years an institutional system has developed, largely as a result of reform efforts, which links these institutions together through their implicit goals.

Furthermore, the political, economic and social environments within the institution as well as those of the society within which the institution is imbedded have a tremendous impact on what occurs, even on a day-to-day basis. "Wars on poverty", Sputnik, White House Conferences on Children, professional licensing, etc., have also shaped the forms, both social and physical, of the educational environment.

Finally, educational environments have a history as institutions within the United States. The reasons for the development of schools and other institutions for children are complex and include changes in the economy, the political context and the actual structure and role of the household and its members in the United States. Most important is that these changes shaped conceptions of "appropriate" child development and ultimately the types of institutions, their physical and social forms, that were developed as agents of socialization.

In order to provide a basis for understanding the implicit goals and structures of contemporary educational environments and their role as agents of socialization, I'll present some brief historical examples of their development and the values, attitudes and physical forms they have inherited.[2]

Prior to the 19th. century in the United States, schools played little role in socialization. In fact, at most one in 10 white children attended schools and even this attendance was sporadic and for limited amounts of the day and year. Yet, the issues of who was to be educated, in what types of settings and in what manner, immediately reveals a continuing trend in U.S. education. For example, the accepted view was that different classes and sexes would attend different schools. While children of the wealthy might be taught informally in the kitchen of an educated woman, poor white children might attend charity schools which operated on the basis of drill and military discipline (Bowles and Gintes, 1976). Most Black children were slaves and were not allowed to gain any literacy skills, although it is clear they managed to do so even under the threat of death (Davis, 1971).

Beginning with the first major reform effort -- the Common School movement --which began in 1830 and created public education, there has continued to be a full scale debate about educational theory and practice . The issues raised then are also duplicated today. These are: the role of religious versus secular values in education; the role of heredity vs. the role of the environment; the need for global vs. specialized education and its relationship to social class, race and sex; the child as a passive recipient or an active learner; obedience to authority vs. self-actualization. Underneath these debates is the central issue of who will control the education of children and toward what end. Whatever the resolution of these issues at a particular historical point in time, control has remained in the hands of dominant groups and education has served their interests.

By the last quarter of the 19th. century, the modern school system much as we know it now was the norm in the urban Northeast. Michael Katz (1971) asserts, and I would agree, that by 1890 American public education had most of the structure common today: it was free, universal, compulsory and supported by taxes. It was also bureaucratic, racist, class-based, and I would add, sexist. There were two major legacies added by the Progressive Era (1870 - 1930). One was the massive use of law to ensure the continuation of these institutions. Thus, reforms which began as arguments for the rights of children and the obligations of society, ended up with the obligations of children and their parents (Takanishi, 1978). The other legacy of the Progressive Era was the creation of an institutional system linking the schools to institutions for "deviants", thus providing a back-up sanction in case the socialization process failed.

The history of the development of educational philosophies and policies, and the processes which have been used to implement and maintain them, led my collegue Leann Rivlin and I to the following conclusion: the usual distinction that is made between a "total institution", such as a residential psychiatric facility, and a "partial" institution, for example, a school, obscures the less obvious power that schools have over the lives of children in the United States. School is compulsory. In most school systems parents have minimal influence, if any. If children do not follow rules for acceptable behavior they can be suspended or expelled, referred for testing or psychological treatment, or moved to special schools or even to psychiatric facilities which, as mentioned above, have historically

served a back-up function for children who do not behave appropriately in schools. These children have historically been the poor, the immigrant, the non-Protestant, U.S. minorities and, within these groups, the boys and girls who did not adhere to traditional sex roles or sexuality (Rothman, 1971; 1980; Magaro et al., 1978; Platt, 1977). If school authorities consider parents to be neglectful they will be subject to various forms of institutional control such as fines, imprisonment or even having their children taken from them. Both historically and at present, the class, cultural, political, religious and sexuality based premises for such removal are well documented (Rothman, 1971, 1980; Massachusetts Childbearing Rights Alliance, 1982). Furthermore, while there are cases in which children are physically, mentally or sexually abused by their parents, the institutions to which they are sent do not necessarily protect them from the very same types of abuse.

What has been the role of the physical environment in the creation of the school as an institution in the United States and what is its role at the present time?

The Role of the Physical Environment in School Reform Efforts

In examining the role of the physical environment in various reform efforts we find that it has basically been designed or used to reflect and support these efforts and their implicit as well as explicit goals.

Many reform efforts used the environmental conditions of schools as justification for their programs and policies and advocated structural changes to match what they said were their new goals. For example, Progressive Era reformers ignored the clear and obvious explanations for why schools in poor school districts, as compared to those in wealthier ones, suffered from overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions and siting by railroads and elevated subway lines that made the noise levels inside unacceptable. Instead, they managed to pass legislation removing the control of schools from local communities by using these physical conditions as evidence of the ignorance of immigrants (Nasaw, 1979).

Issues of overcrowding and unhealthy conditions were also used to build new schools. Indeed, it was between 1865 and 1920 that most of today's U.S. schools were constructed and by 1918 education had become big business "with a plant valued at two billion dollars" (Butts and Cremin, 1953, p. 405). The majority were large boxes divided into smaller uniform cubicles. In keeping with the spirit of scientific management prevalent at the time and which reflected industry and its needs, factory concepts were applied with a focus on efficiency. Bagley in his book Classroom Management, printed in 1907 and reprinted 30 times between 1907 and 1927, claimed that "the expert observer could immediately guage the efficiency of the teacher by the manner in which lines pass to and from the room" (Spring, 1972, p. 46), an attitude which remains today. So do the physical expressions of these attitudes. A study conducted during this time documented that 33 student hours of time were "wasted" each day in a school of 500 pupils due to the inefficiency of movement during "transition times." This researcher suggested that design should decrease transition time to a minimum, a design creating the ubiquitious corridors we have now (Cox,1921). Separate boys and girls entrances were also created to "preserve order."(Nasaw, 1979).

Most of our work took place during the late 1960's and early to mid 1970's, though our most recent project was implemented in 1982-1983. I will conclude my historical examples by using that period as a final illustration of the role of the physical environment in reform efforts.

Public education during that time must be examined in light of a number of events: the Supreme Court decision of 1954 calling for the desegregation of schools and the violent response of Southern whites to that decision, the self-criticism that followed the Soviet launching of Sputnik, "white flight" to newly developed and federally subsidized suburbs, the promise of equal opportunity of the war on poverty and the great society, the emergence of "flower children", consumerism, revolts in Black urban areas and the catastrophic consequences and protests that accompanied the war in Vietnam — to name a few events of the period.

This period has been viewed as a period of educational experimentation and openness. There was a tremendous increase in school construction and heavy local investment in buildings, although most of this took place in white middle-class suburban areas. Open space schools and informal or "open" education were part of the experimentation as well. We now know that this was only a temporary period of expansion and openness, a time of educational optimism which followed extensive pressure by U.S. minority groups, and then women, for equal opportunity. On the elementary school level one experiment was community control of schools; the other was open education. How were these linked?

While residents in most middle class Christian white communities have had control of their schools through both formal and informal means historically in the U.S., the idea of community control by Blacks and Latins provoked fear and bigotry. As conflicts about community controlled districts in Black and Latin communities escalated and as ideology was shifting from civil rights to Black Power, pro-integration views were presented in a report which had been requested by President Johnson in 1965 and which was published in 1967 (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967). The short term recommendation in this report for dealing with the effects of racism on Black and white children included changes in the size, environment and structure of schools. It advocated the creation of larger facilities, claiming children would be drawn into them from many neighborhoods at once and it would be cost effective and insure integration. The report also advocated flexible, open space classrooms, ungraded classes and team teaching, claiming these would allow for greater attention to individual needs and capabilities of students. Though the claim that such environments would lead to integration was dubious, especially in light of patterns of residential segregation in urban areas, the link was made between large and flexible schools and a better learning experience.

Yet, early open design schools were not based on a philosophic commitment to integration or to a changed model of education. They were based on cost and efficiency.(Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1960; 1965). But it was claimed that the open plan <u>was</u> a catalyst for change —"it could create a humanistic educational process unbounded by the barriers built into the conventional school houses with their rows of standard classrooms" (Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1965, p. 3). Between 1967and 1970, over 50% of all new school construction

was open plan design (George, 1975) but in most of these schools it was not accompanied by informal or "open" teaching. Most of these schools have either constructed walls or set up partitions returning them to traditional layouts (Ross and Gump, 1978).

In contrast, some attempts were made to institute the British model of informal or open education into schools that were traditionally designed. Featherstone, credited by some educators for having introduced the concept of open education into the United States in a series of articles about British Infant Schools in 1967 (Gross and Gross, 1972; Nyquist and Hawes, 1972), cautioned in 1972 that

> ...the movement for open informal schools — does not cancel out old issues. In fact, open education will be a sham unless those supporting it also address themselves to recurring, fundamental problems, such as the basic inequality and racism in the society(p. 101).

He argued that

> issues like school integration and community control have not disappeared, to be replaced by issues like humane education...(p. 101).

Yet, in fact, this is exactly what happened in the educational establishment over the next few years. In 1976, Bowles and Gintes had written:

> Enterpreneurial capitalism, which brought us the chairs nailed to the floor classroom, has given way to corporate capitalism. It may belatedly usher in the era of open classrooms and internalized behavior norms contemplated for at least a century by so many educational reformers. (p.254).

But, by the time we came back to the schools in the early 1980's, open education had passed as a phenomenon. While attempts at open education had spread rapidly they most often took place within individual schools and even in these were limited to a few classes. As alternative arrangements within the institutional system they had to conform to overriding structures such as standardized testing and contained classrooms. The contradictions between self-initiated, individually paced learning and standardized testing which determined whether children would be promoted or left back were not addressed except by parents within poor U.S. minority communities who knew their children would suffer most. They also saw the pitfalls in "free movement" when it was their children who were labeled as behavior problems. In fact, they did not have to worry because the children allowed to participate in the open classrooms were the children who were seen by the schools as being able to "handle" what was perceived to be a lessened amount of structure. Most poor Black and Latin students generally did not fall within this category from the viewpoints of their predominantly white, middle-class teachers.

In the current conservative political atomosphere and in the wake of budget cuts for education and other social programs there has been a strong move "back to basics" and a tendency to reduce costs by removing all but the bare essentials. This occurs in a context in which many public schools, especially but not exclusively in urban areas, are serving largely poor or U.S. minority populations.

The most recent educational innovation is the introduction of computers into the schools, largely donated by philanthropic manufacturers seeking a lucrative and long term market for their servicing and software. This is leading people to re-design once again. Indeed, a recent article in the New York Times (November, 1986) reported on the deplorable physical conditions in New York schools, many of which had not even been painted in 30 years, In the same article was the report of a plan to create computer rooms in every school. Yet, recent reports (Olson, 1983; 1984;) indicate that the access to computers and to learning different types of computer based skills is not equitable between or within schools. White middle-class communities are the primary recipients and their children will have already had access to a home computer before they ever enter school. White middle-class males are the primary users, especially for programming and creating systems.

Thus, the discrepancy between rhetoric and reality which we observed in our work and the triumph of tradition over innovation, in fact, reflects constraints placed on the forms and functioning of educational environments by the social system. The main thrust of education has remained the same — socialization of children to the status quo. All of the schools in which we worked shared a set of institutional qualities manifested in their principles, practices and the quality and uses of the physical environment. These reflected the main thrust of the school system based on a set of underlying assumptions not necessarily derived from the settings. These assumptions are the barriers to innovation.

Institutional Qualities and Their Underlying Assumptions

Structure and Routine. Daily life in schools is an unvarying series of events taking place in an endless repetition of similar spaces, built into an unvarying time schedule, all defined by some outside power. The overriding goals of these settings take precedence over children as people. Despite the physical space and lip service to the concept of the "whole child", the child is only and totally "a student." Cooking, block building and woodworking, for example, disappear from the physical space as well as the curriculum as education becomes the more serious business of schools, usually by the 2nd. grade. And, when they re-appear they are either treated as "throw-away classes" for the "brighter" students or "vocational training" for those students who are not considered to be "college material."

Very little time or space belongs to the child. The classrooms belong to the teacher who arranges the furniture and determines which materials should be hung on the walls and bulletin boards.

Spontaneity is viewed as impulsivity, as disruptive to ongoing plans and as expendable in light of more important educational goals. The assumption is that restriction is necessary and the power to restrict is implemented through the use of control by those in authority.

Control and Authority. Throughout the history of schools in the United States, control and authority have been prevalent themes in terms of policy, programs and physical environments. Sometimes their expression is overt. At other times it is less obvious but powerful nevertheless. And remnants of earlier approaches are ingrained in present day schools.

One of the clearest yet most accepted and unquestioned example of an institutional routine linked to the exercise of control and authority is "lining up." Given its frequency within a child's day within a school and the focus placed on it by those in authority,

lining up often carries more significance than the activity it leads from or to. During lining up children are instructed to be quiet, look ahead, stand straight, and so on, even when there is no apparant rationale, and they are reprimanded severely if they do not comply. The primacy of order and obedience is clear. The ubiquitousness of corridors in schools symbolizes this emphasis on orderly movement of bodies from one place to another. Then, the free movement of the children is further curtailed because going somewhere distant and out of view leads to the suspicion of problem behavior.

These procedures of containment are used throughout children's school experiences to define the authority of the adults and to demand obedience of the children. We have observed children expected to line up or clean up within a specified and impossibly brief number of minutes when they have no access to watches or clocks. Children are told to stand or sit in corners facing the wall, humiliated and rough-handled for failing to adhere to an impossible standard in a physical environment which provides no support for the expected behavior.

In all of the settings, the underlying assumption is that if authority is not exercised and if obedience is not required, children will behave in ways totally out of control. One of the ways to attempt to insure control is through the constant surveillance of children, another quality which defines the institution.

Privacy, Publicness and Surveillance . Life for the children in a school is public. They have virtually no time or space to which adults can be denied access. And, even when such spaces seem to exist, it does not mean that children actually achieve privacy or escape surveillance. For example, specially built lofts or partioned areas were described by teachers as appropriate for quiet work or for supporting children's privacy needs. But, teachers decided when these could be used and by whom.

Privacy is so antithetical to the institutional goals of order, control and enforced sociability, that children's attempts to seek out privacy are defined as their problem. Children who stay in the bathroom too long or go too often are considered suspect or untrustworthy. Children who find psychological privacy by daydreaming are labelled as "inattentive" or "disinterested." Labels are not insignificant. Those who apply them have the power to determine the fate of children, as they become part of children's records, stigmatizing them well into the future. (Rist, 1970).

Surveillance, control and structure reflect attempts to achieve the last implicit institutional goal of conformity.

Conformity vs. Independence. Most children's institutions cite as their goal the development of independence, albeit in the context of children being social. Our experience indicates that any granting of independence usually is the result of the child's overall conformity to the goals of the setting and is a privelege given to those who obey. For example, in terms of the use of the physical environment, our observations of open education classrooms with stated philosophies of children's independent movement revealed a very limited use of available space despite complaints by teachers of crowdedness. Teachers wanted students in view, a contradiction to independent movement, especially since teachers remained more or less stationary in one location, even when they didn't have a desk. Only children considered trustworthy had legitimate freedom to go outside of the classroom since they were awarded the jobs as monitors and could perform errands in other parts of the school. These were the same children who got to use the private spaces. Such programmed independence hides conformity from view and fosters the idea that individuals are responsible for all of their

behaviors.

What Are Children Learning in Public Schools in the United States Today?

Despite the variety of class and cultural backgrounds of children, schools are teaching children and judging them by a set of criteria reflecting and designed to maintain the status quo. From the food available in the cafeteria, to the graphics on the walls and the books children are given to read, children are being taught to value the qualities of white, Christian, middle-class life.

They learn that the overriding purpose of daily settings is functional -- a school is a place to learn -- and the purpose prescribes the range of appropriate behaviors. Life is a series of timed and planned events and spaces defining human needs rather than responding to them. Children are rewarded for individualism rather than individuality, for conformity rather than community. Children are not usually aware of the complicated nature of this thinking. The message they get is that behaving properly is paramount, including the proper use of the physical environment. Those children whose families or community styles parallel the proper behavior will find it easier to comply, althoug we question the price paid for adherence to this narrow set of goals. Children whose communities and families have values and ways of life that run counter to those of the institutional system get the message that left to their own devices or to their families and communities, their behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable, inadequate and inferior. Most children internalize the values of the institution and use them to judge themselves, their families and communities.

In these settings, the children who are rewarded are those who do not challenge authority. Children are learning that life is structured by "they", who by virtue of their age and position, have the power to make decisions and to control the lives of others. In effect, children are being taught to be passive rather than active creators of their own lives and experiences.

What Are The Prospects For Positive Institutional Change

The most difficult task is to make changes that address the values behind the educational system and that would, at the very least, challenge those values if not change them. This requires questioning the assumptions that are made about children and their needs and the processes by which these are translated into institutional goals and physical settings. Our role in institutional change requires that we understand that institutional environments and their assumptions often create the negative behaviors attributed to the phsychological problems of children or to the inadequacies of their families and communities. The power of the institution allows it to have an unquestioned ratinale for its form and functioning. Without questioning its assumptions, we become a party to continuing its role.

In acknowledging the resistance of institutions to change one conclusion is to stop trying. Another alternative is the concept of "radical reform"(Reissman, 1977). If the changes that we seek to institute challenge the core values they may have an impact beyond usual reform efforts. Working with those who have the least power and will be most affected by change and, in fact, helping them to envison and implement alternatives is another possibility.

For example, we created and implemented a neighborhood participatory planning and design process with children which challenged the image of children being incapable of doing such things. There were many positive outcomes of this project on both individual and group levels. Many aspects of the project demonstrated to the children their power to affect change and it helped them see themselves in ways different from the institution's views of them (Baldassari et al., 1987). For my purposes in this paper I want to briefly describe only one part of the project. Children planned and took us on a trip through their neighborhood. They took us to places they thought we should see and they photographed the ones they wanted. Prior to this we had gradually introduced different types of media and art materials and had shown them how they could develop and transform images. When their photos were developed they selected the ones they wanted to transform. We enlarged these and made black and white xeroxes of them for the children to work with. These were the same children whose initial future images of schools I described at the beginning of this paper. Two of the images they selected to transform were of schools, their own and a local Junior High School. Some of them simply used magic markers to color the school building. Others used collaging techniques, adding images which might give some indication of what might be possible rather than skyscraper schools, hi-tech robots or silent lunches. For example, they added ballet dancers performing out front and play equipment as well. (Figures 4 and 5).

In fact, what has been most promising about our work has been the children themselves. We know that the potential exists not based on a romantic vision of children but on what we have seen them capable of doing when the environment, in all its aspects, gives them a sense and indeed the possibility, of having an effect on the world and some control over their futures. Perhaps this is best expressed by one of the 11 year old boys who, several months after the project was over, described how he had convinced his parents to allow him to attend an anti-nuclear demonstration he had heard about

> I told them, I was going down there. I thought I could change my future. I could stop them, at least one more hand could help stop the war. So I went on the walk.

We can use our experiences in institutional settings, our research data and our understanding of history, not to become the creators of environments, but to become the creators of alternative ways of creating environments — processes which themselves will foster the healthy development of children and give them the possibility of creating their own alternative futures.

NOTES

1. The ideas and perspectives I present in this paper were developed with my collegue Leanne Rivlin and are more fully explicated in our book, Institutional Settings in Children's Lives, New York: John Wiley, 1985.

2. The historical examples in this and the following section are necessarily brief. For a more detailed and complete history see Rivlin and Wolfe, 1985.

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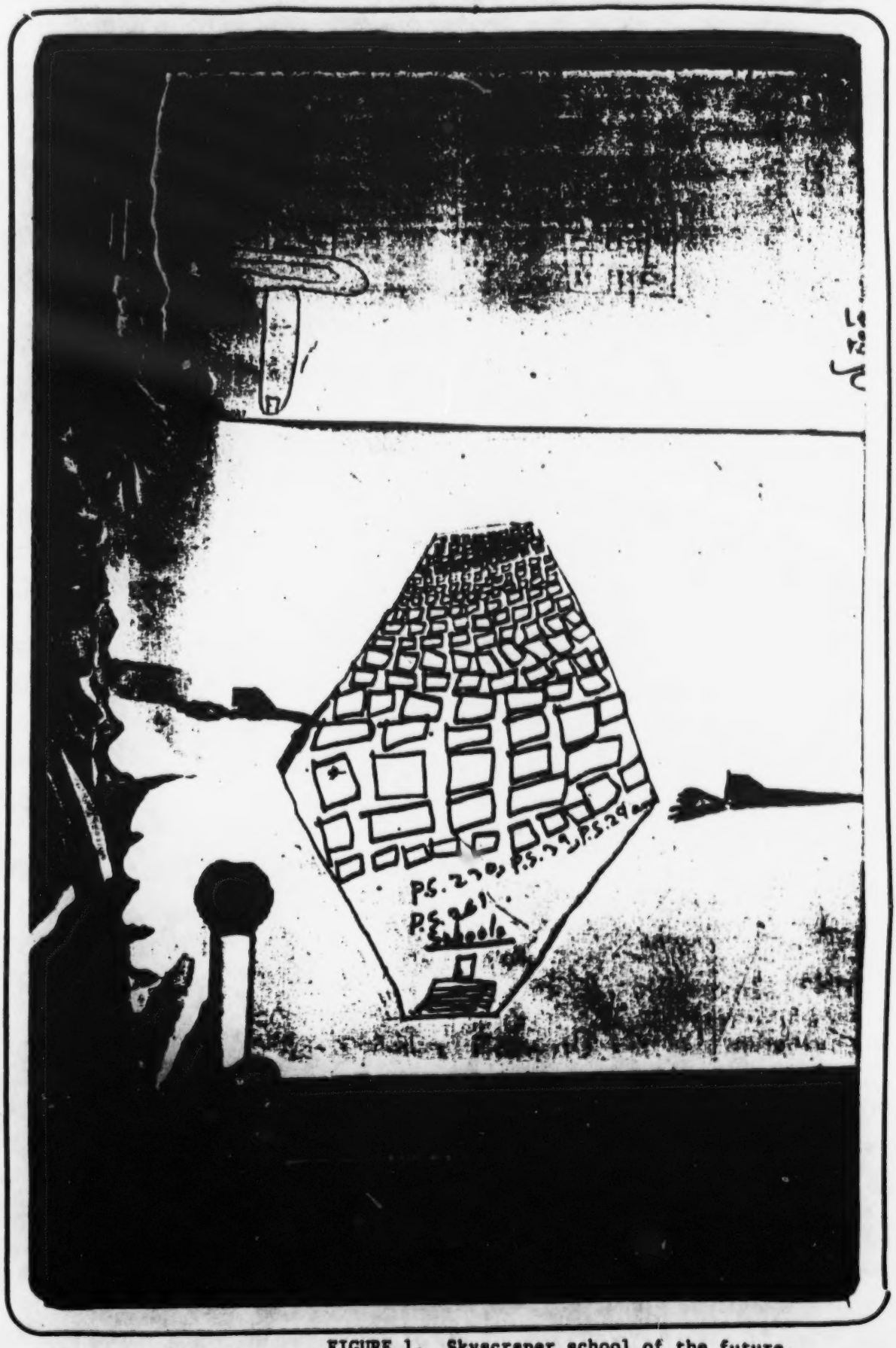

FIGURE 1. Skyscraper school of the future.

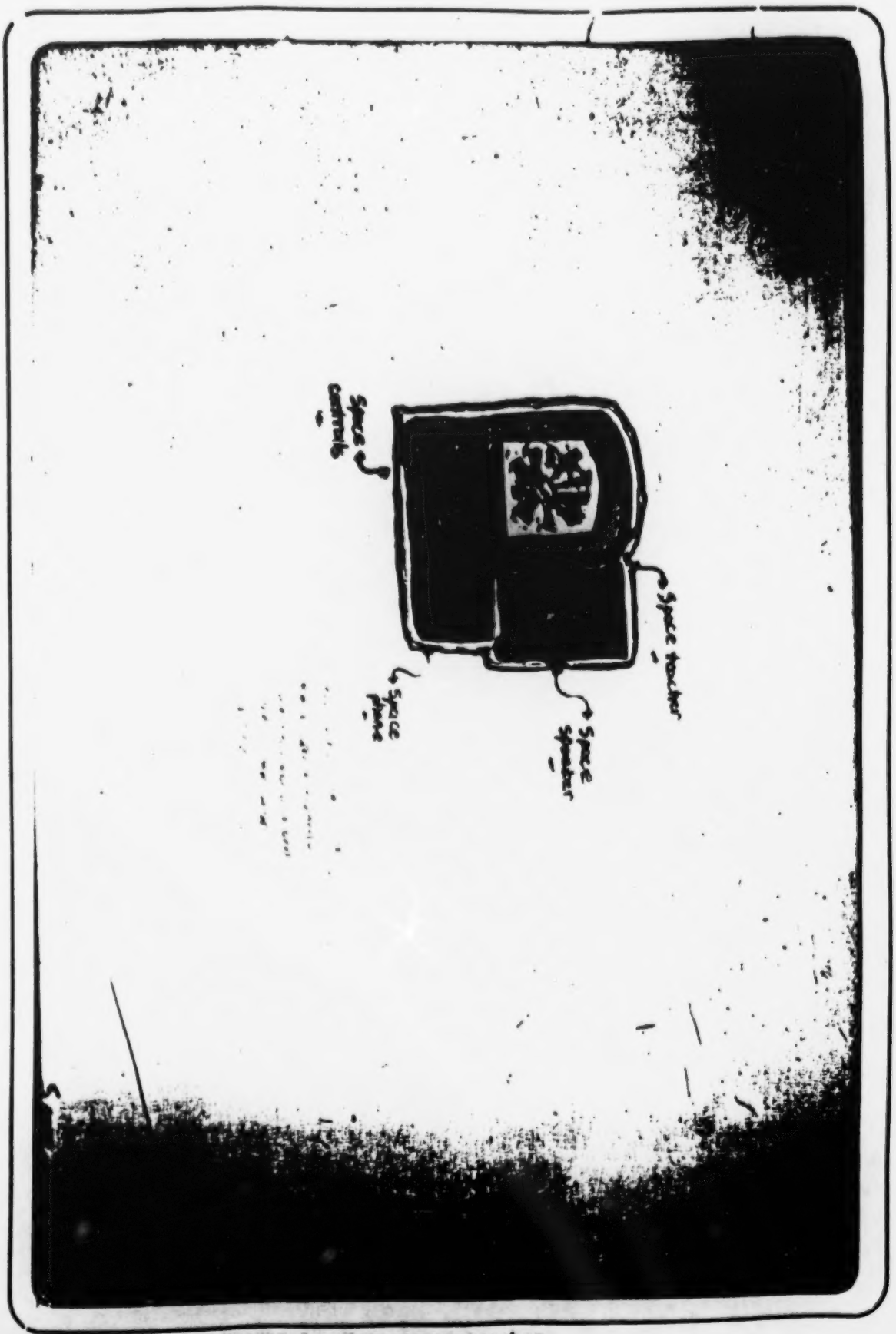

FIGURE 2. Home space teacher

FIGURE 3. Silent lunch.
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FIGURE 4. School transformed (in original the dancers are in color)

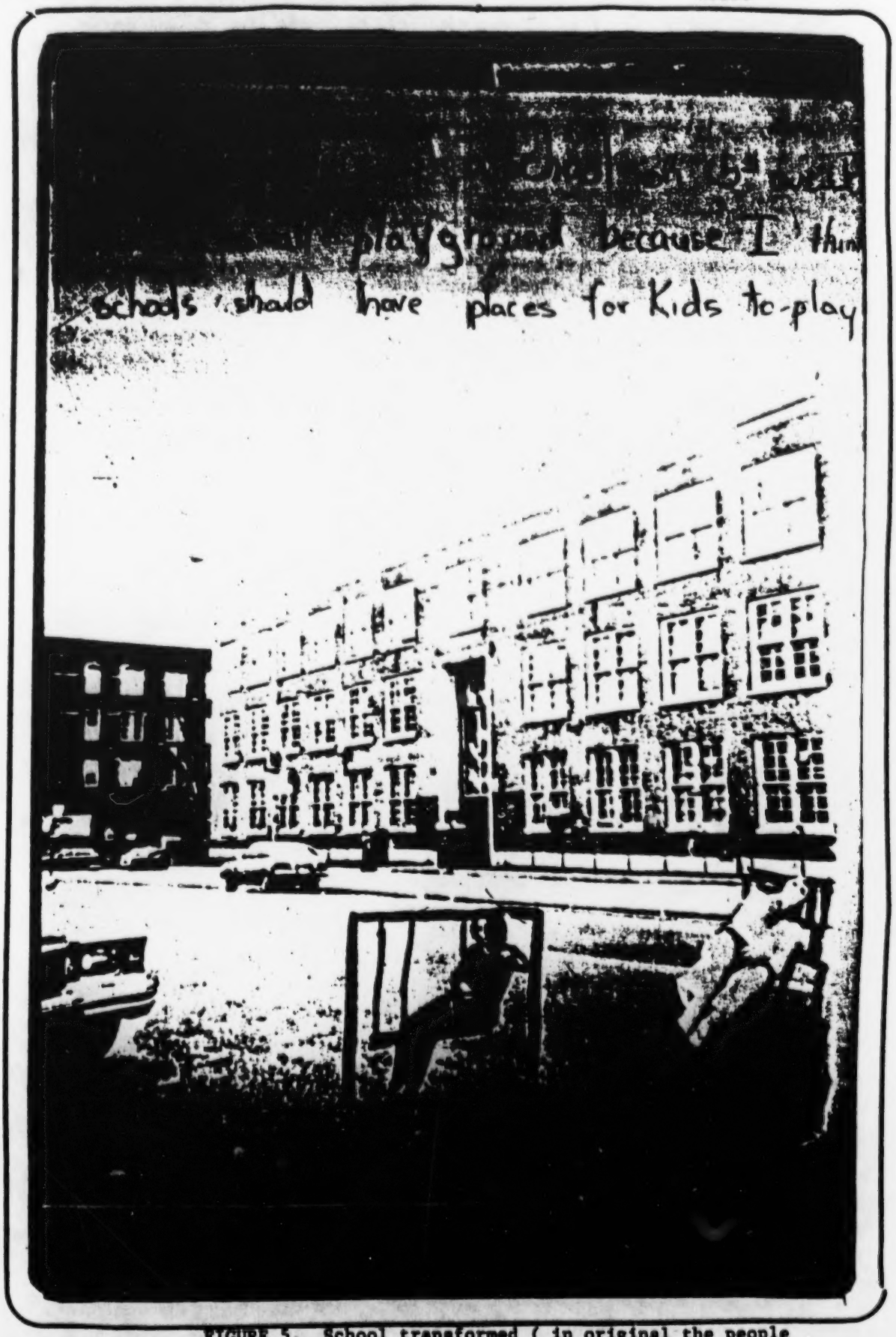

FIGURE 5. School transformed (in original the people are wearing colored clothing).